



For Immediate Release: December 20, 2016

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### Douthit Families named 2017 Friend of the National Western

The Douthit families of St. Francis, Kansas, represented by Douthit Herefords and 4V Ranch Douthit Herefords, will be recognized in January as the 2017 Friend of the National Western by the Red Meat Club of Denver. A perennial fixture as Yards exhibitors, 2017 will mark the families' 74th year exhibiting purebred Hereford cattle at the National Western.

Frank and Mary Douthit settled in northwest Kansas in the 1930s, and shortly thereafter sons Jim and Thad bought the family's first Hereford bull. After Thad turned to commercial operations in the 1970s, the Douthit Herefords tradition continued under brother Jim and his three sons, Walter, Roger, and Steve, who took over as partners in 1984. Primarily for estate planning purposes, in 2008 the brothers dissolved their partnership. While Roger turned to running commercial cattle after that, Walter and Steve continued the seed stock operation as Douthit Herefords and 4V Ranch Douthit Herefords, respectively.

The brothers at the time divided the Douthit cowherd on a lottery basis. Although that common genetic foundation still yields a lot of similarities between the two operations, some variation in type and design has inevitably emerged as each operation independently makes selection and breeding decisions based on personal preferences and customer demands.

Despite that variation, certain themes continue that have placed the Douthit's at the forefront of the Hereford breed for roughly 80 years. For the cattle, structure, disposition, calving ease and feed efficiency are paramount traits. And for the families themselves, honesty, integrity, and consistency are the guiding principles. It's a combination that has won the Douthit family the respect of their peers, as evidenced by the induction of Walter, Roger, and Steve into the American Hereford Association Hall of Fame in 2012.

Today, the fourth generation of the family is actively managing both operations. Roger passed in 2013, and Steve was lost in a tragic farming accident in the fall of 2015. 4V Ranch is guided today by the family of Steve and his wife Melva, including their children Ana, Erica, Margo, Courtney and Thomas, their sons-in-law Tyler Enfield and Matt Gattshall and their grandsons Zarik and Quade. Walter, his daughter Megan and her husband Chuck Downey direct operations at Douthit Herefords.

The Douthit's will be honored at the Red Meat Club dinner on Thursday, January 12, 2017, held in the National Western Club. This year's featured speaker is meat industry leader and NWSS executive board member Mark Gustafson. Drawing on more than 38 years' experience in promoting and advancing U.S. red meat exports, Mark will speak on "International Markets: Past, Present & Future." Those interested in attending should contact Anneliese Phippen at (303)299-5556 to see if reservations are still available.